Learning to Do Qualitative Data Analysis: A Starting Point

Abstract

Given the vast and diverse qualitative analytic landscape, what might be a generative starting point for researchers who desire to learn how to produce quality qualitative analyses? This question is particularly relevant to researchers new to the field and practice of qualitative research and instructors and mentors who regularly introduce students to qualitative research practices. In this article, we seek to offer what we view as a useful starting point for learning how to do qualitative analysis. We begin by discussing briefly the general landscape of qualitative research methodologies and methods. To contextualize our suggestions, we review the qualitative analytic practices commonly used within human resource development (HRD). Following this, we describe thematic analysis in more detail, including why we believe it is a particularly useful analytic approach to consider when first learning about qualitative analysis. We share seven common practices or important considerations for carrying out a thematic analysis and conclude by highlighting key considerations for assuring quality when conducting a thematic analysis.